



24 March 2022

The Hon Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

Dear Prime Minister,

**REQUEST FOR ELECTION COMMITMENT TO RESET NATIONAL MEDICINES POLICY REVIEW AND INCLUSION OF THE PATIENT COMMUNITY IN THE REVIEW OF HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT USED BY THE PBAC**

Better Access Australia is writing to you following Medicines Australia's media announcement that your Government has decided that the Review of the National Medicines Policy (NMP) should be put on hold until after the federal election.

We thank the Government for responding to the multiple requests from patients, clinicians and industry to halt the rushed process for this most important Review, including Better Access Australia's own letter to you of 13 February. Whilst calling a halt to the process is a good first step, the imperative is the second step – what is next?

Better Access Australia is asking the Government to commit to a fresh approach to the NMP Review based on genuine collaboration and consultation with the community if re-elected. As per our letter of 13 February to you we are asking for:

- ✓ a new process led by an independent Review team;
- ✓ new patient-centric terms of reference based on the feedback to date in the 156 submissions made to the old Review;
- ✓ a 12-18 month timetable with the new policy endorsed by December 2023; and
- ✓ a commitment to the Review including a community engagement plan that reaches beyond the 'usual suspects' or 'usual key stakeholders' and encourages input from the broader community, including individual patients experiences via in-person 'listening' workshops in each state and territory

Your Government made a commitment to the NMP in 2019 recognising its importance for so many aspects of healthcare access in Australia. We appreciate COVID-19 meant this had to be less of a priority than originally planned. As the country goes from strength to strength after emerging from the pandemic, we are asking for you to reinforce that commitment once again as part of the forthcoming election.

The NMP will permeate and dictate not merely medicines and vaccines access in Australia but as we increasingly see: access to diagnostics; therapeutics; and medical devices. Thus, in the spirit of stewardship, we must ensure that the NMP Review is robust, considered, thoughtful and most importantly, fully transparent.

This is why Better Access Australia is also asking for a commitment to ensuring the Review of HTA used by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee is opened up to the community - to patients and clinicians, whose future access to medicines will be dictated by the outcomes agreed between the industry and the government.

Whilst we all appreciate the HTA Review is contained within the Government's strategic agreement with Medicine's Australia, it should not exclude the community from its deliberations, considerations and reflections before arriving at a new framework.

As you are aware, Better Access Australia has been calling for a rethink of the processes of access to medicine subsidies in Australia calling for a *#100days KPI from ARTG registration to listing on the PBS*.

As the average listing dates stretch out beyond 820 days, we need to reflect on the system itself, not just the inputs to the evaluation dossier.

Any review that does not ask how it can do things differently, does not stop and question the outcomes it is delivering for the community, does not consider the models of access in other countries, and does not consider the community's concerns and expectations, is just a guidelines review.

We can do better and we must, and we will only do better when Terms of Reference, public consultation processes and opportunities to engage are standard as part of this significant HTA review.

We thank you for considering our request and look forward to hearing of the Coalition's commitment to improving the patient and community engagement processes for these two Reviews.

Yours sincerely,



Felicity McNeill PSM  
Board Chair



Helen Innes  
Board Member



David Mackay  
Board Member

**Better health, disability and social services  
Better Access Australia.**